



State of California—Health and Human Services Agency
Department of Health Services



ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER
Governor

INFO ONLY _____
ACTION NEEDED X
POLICY CHANGE X
_____ Administration
_____ Nutrition Staff
 X All Staff Affected
_____ ISIS Change

ATN#: 08-29-05-062

August 29, 2005

To: Primary WIC Program Contact
Other Users of the WIC Program Manual (WPM)

Subject: **Miscellaneous Policy Clarifications and Waivers to Support Services to Eligible Participants**

Purpose

I am writing to provide you several alternatives for operational streamlining which you are encouraged to implement within the next two months in order to increase your program's average participation level to 100 percent of your allocated caseload.

Background

Over the past year, our combined food cost containment efforts, along with minimal increases in food costs, have made funds available to serve additional participants. As a result, we awarded 56 of our 82 WIC agencies additional Nutrition Services and Administrative (NSA) funds this April to assist them in achieving a higher caseload target. We also awarded four agencies that demonstrated unmet need and capacity to grow additional funding beyond the amount awarded to the others. Nonetheless, we continue to hear from you that the impact of rising operational costs and insufficient NSA funds are combining to make achieving these targets increasingly difficult.

In a concentrated effort to streamline operations without compromising nutrition and breastfeeding support services, the WIC-CWA Policy Redesign Work Group has met since November of last year to streamline non-nutrition and customer service policies to fulfill minimum federal requirements only. This group has successfully trimmed down the procedures for voter registration, participant orientation and outreach documentation. As a result of this group's work, the Branch has also clarified the documentation requirements for the triage matrix and the Individual Nutrition Education Plan (INEP).

Streamlining Nutrition-related Policies

The work on streamlining policies related to the provision of nutrition services has taken longer to get underway, because the California WIC community as a whole has been reluctant to address proposals which might have the unintended consequence of compromising the quality of the nutrition services provided to our families. Now, however, it is apparent that the "nibbling around the edges" of streamlining will not have sufficient impact to support meeting our target participation for Federal Fiscal Year 2006. We have therefore begun to re-evaluate the nutrition services provided to WIC families. Whatever we do, we want to be planned and intentional, not haphazard.

As a first step, I am writing to provide the following options for further streamlining participant services at your sites. None of the changes described below violate federal regulations; they do, however, represent a relaxation of several longstanding practices to which the California WIC community has adhered over the years. I wish to assure you that all of these practices have been undertaken by one or more of your colleagues and have been a factor in increasing participation without compromising nutrition and breastfeeding services. It is our hope that by targeting our education more precisely to healthy eating and active living, and by referring participants to the health care system for needed medical care when appropriate, we can achieve our goals of healthier families while still meeting our targets for serving as many eligible families as funding will allow. More information will be coming soon describing our progress in these and other areas.

Procedure and Policy Relaxation Measures

- 1. Waive trimester nutrition education contacts for pregnant women as needed in order to double or triple issue families.** Federal regulations require a minimum of two nutrition education contacts during pregnancy: the first to discuss good nutrition during pregnancy, especially as it relates to the woman's nutrition risk, and one to encourage her to breastfeed. Most women should be

able to receive at least these two contacts if they are enrolled in WIC early in the second trimester.

2. **Allow space in the schedule and support walk-ins; make it easier for staff to issue Food Instruments (FIs) to an applicant or participant who arrives at the site than to ask the participant to return.** We encourage you to use signs, "call waiting" messages and no-show phone calls to stress this point. Avoid speaking about "appointments", rather, stress coming into the WIC office. It will help if group nutrition education is made more generic, rather than specific to one category, so that any time a family comes in, there is a topic they can learn from.
3. **Print out lists of participants who miss their visit to the WIC office and ask staff to make personal phone calls rather than depending on the auto dialer.** It is also a good idea to phone a family that has received three months' worth of FIs before their next scheduled visit - we have indications that people are more likely to forget their scheduled visit after this period of time. This activity does take some staff effort -hopefully it can be arranged to be done during relatively quiet periods during the workday - but pays off in the number of participants who visit WIC.
4. **Mail FIs to families who have transportation or other issues if when you call them, it appears that the situation will not change in time for a visit to the WIC site.** Make these arrangements earlier in the month in order to free up space in the WIC office for those who are able to come in.
5. **Print out lists of pregnant women to call, whose Expected Dates of Delivery (EDD) are in the current month and who have received the minimum education contacts.** If there are reasons why it would not be prudent for the participant to travel to the WIC site so late in her pregnancy, offer to mail her FIs for the one month until she delivers.
6. **Triple issue children after the second birthday, with rare exceptions.** For child participants, the value of three months' of checks is about the same as one month's worth for a formula-fed baby. Nutrition education can focus around Fit WIC activities and other already-designed learner-centered classes for families with toddlers.
7. **Identify one nutrition risk for eligibility purposes for postpartum women and children after the second birthday.** For educational purposes, you may still want staff to ask a generic question such as, "Has your child seen a doctor for an

illness during the past six months?" in order to; in most cases, however, nutrition education may focus on healthy eating and active living topics and/or stressing the need for regular medical check-ups and follow-up care for medical issues.

8. **Accept blood test results for certification from any time in the period of the category (women and infants) and within the past year for children over two years.** The ninety-day period in regulation refers to the time between the date of certification and the date WIC staff documents the test results in ISIS. It does not refer to the date of the test itself. Therefore, it may help to ask parents at every visit if they have a blood test result from a previous medical visit and record it in the ISIS blood test screen; if you don't receive it in time for one certification (past the 90-day deadline), you're ahead for the next one!

Action Needed

Do not wait for official policy revisions to be released before implementing these changes. You will not be cited for violating current policy in these areas in any Letter of Findings connected with a Program Evaluation (PEs) that is still in our office (PEs with exit conferences in late May or sooner). Please feel free to consult with your Regional Advisor or Consultant at (916) 928-8500, if you have any questions regarding these or other policies.

Sincerely,

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